

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /051 W

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O R 231151Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3777

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER RESIGNS

REF: BANGKOK 10747

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER M. R. SENI PRAMOT HAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO RESIGN AS PRIME MINISTER. IF, AS HE HAS STATED, HIS RESIGNATION IS PRESENTED TO THE KING (WHO RETURNS TO BANGKOK EVENING SEPT 23) AND KING ACCEPTS PRESENT THAI GOVERNMENT, WHICH SENI HEADS, WILL BE TERMINATED AND MACHINERY WILL BE SET IN MOTION FOR THE FORMATION OF A SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. AT ABOUT 12:50 P.M. LOCAL TIME ON SEPTEMBER 23, CHUAN

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LIKPHAI, MINISTER ATTACHED TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE,

ANNOUNCED DURING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE RETURN OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTIKHACHON TO THAILAND, THAT M.R. SENI WOULD RESIGN AS PRIME MINISTER. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AFTER SEVERAL MPS, INCLUDING DEMOCRAT PARTY SPOKESMAN WIRA MUSIKAPHONG, BITTERLY CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT OVER ITS HANDLING OF THE THANOM AFFAIR.

2. DAMRONG LATTHAPHIPHAT, COMMERCE MINISTER AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, LATER TOLD THE PRESS THAT M.R. SENI WOULD GO TO THE AIRPORT AT 5: P.M. TO MEET THE KING, EXPLAIN THE SITUATION IN THAILAND AND REASON FOR HIS RESIGNATION. THE KING IS RETURNING TO BANGKOK AFTER A MONTH'S STAY IN SOUTHERN THAILAND. DAMRONG ALSO SAID THAT THE DEMOCRATS, AS THE LARGEST PARTY, WILL FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. HE DID NOT SAY WHO THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE.

3. CHANA RUANGSAENG, DEMOCRAT MP FROM BANGKOK TOLD THE CHIEF POLITICAL ASSISTANT OF THE EMBASSY THAT M.R. SENI IS DETERMINED TO RESIGN. ACCORDINGLY, CHANA IS SENDING TELEGRAMS TO DEMOCRATS ABROAD URGING THEIR IMMEDIATE RETURN TO BANGKOK. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS SCHEDULED TO MEET LATER TODAY TO DISCUSS THE RESIGNATION. ACCORDING TO ANOTHER DEMOCRAT MP, MANY DEMOCRAT MPS WILL BE AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE TO ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE M. R. SENI NOT TO RESIGN AS PARTY LEADER.

4. ACCORDING TO SOURCES AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, THE RESIGNATION WHICH HAS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE KING THROUGH THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE IS OFFICIAL ONCE IT IS RECEIVED AND REGISTERED AT THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD. NO ROYAL APPROVAL IS NECESSARY.

5. ACCORDING TO THE 1974 CONSTITUTION OF THAILAND, A PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION TRIGGERS THE FALL OF THE CABINET. HIS RESIGNATION DOES NOT MEAN THE AUTOMATIC DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER COULD, HOWEVER, RECOMMEND THIS ACTION TO THE KING, BUT M.R. SENI HAS NOT INDICATED IN THIS INSTANCE THAT HE WILL DO SO. THE CABINET WILL REMAIN IN CARETAKER STATUS UNTIL A NEW CABINET IS FORMED

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AND HAS WON THE PARLIAMENT'S VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.

6. AFTER THE RESIGNATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER IS OFFICIAL, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE WILL HAVE THE DUTY OF PROPOSING THE NAME OF THE NEW PRIME MINISTER TO THE KING. THE PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IS AS OUTLINED IN REFTTEL.

7. IT IS PROBABLE THAT M.R. SENI PRAMOT (OR A NEW LEADER

OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY) WILL BE SELECTED TO TRY TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT, SINCE IT HS THE LARGEST NUMBER OF MPS IN PARLIAMENT. IF THIS IS THE CASE: (A) THE PRESENT COALITON MAY BE REFORMED, WITH SOME CHANGES IN THE MINISTERIAL PROTFOLOS; B) THE DEMOCRATS MAY ALTER THE COALITION BY ELIMINATING THE THAI NATION OR THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY FROM THE COALITION; OR C) THE DEMOCRATS MAY ENTER INTO A COALITION WITH THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY OF M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT AND THE SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTY OF SAWAT KHAMPRAKOP, A COMBINATION THAT HAS BEEN MUCH RUMORED FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

8. IF THE DEMOCRATS ARE NOT ABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, THE NUCLEUS OF THE KHUKRIT COALITION OF 1975 COULD BE REFORMED, THIS COALITION WOULD INCLUDE THE THAI NATION (56 MPS), THE SOCIAL ACTION (46 MPS), THE SOCIAL JUSTICE (28 MPS) THE SOCIAL AGRARIAN (9) AND THE SOCIAL NATIONALIST (8) PARTIES. IF THIS COALITION EMERGES EITHER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN OR THAWI CHUNLASAP ARE THE PRIME MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES.

9. COMMENT: THE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED RESIGNATION OF M.R. SENI HAS SHOCKED THE ENTIRE POLITICAL COMMUNITY. DAO REPORTS THAT THAI ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN PLACED ON FULL ALERT. SENI HAS BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED FOR WEAK LEADERSHIP SINCE HE TOOK OFFICE, AND BEEN SUBJECTED TO CONTRADICTORY PRESSURES FROM FACTIONS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY. THE PRESSURE, ESPECIALLY WITHIN THE PARTY, INCREASED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE RETURN OF FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIAN AND THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTIKHACHON. THE BITTER AND INSULTING ATTACK ON HIM BY HIS OWN PARTY'S SPOKESMAN, WIRA MUSIKAPHONG APPARENTLY WAS THE STRAW THAT BROKE THE CAMEL'S BACK AND LED TO HIS DECISION TO TENDER HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESIGNATION.
BURKE

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Message Attributes

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